

Ivan Argüelles

THE STRUCTURE OF HELL

Ivan Argüelles was raised and has lived in various places on planet Earth: Mexico City, Los Angeles, Minnesota, Chicago, New York, Italy, London, and now resides in Berkeley, California, where he is employed as a serials librarian with the University of California. Among collections of poems that he has had published are: *THE INVENTION OF SPAIN* (New York, 1978), *CAPTIVE OF THE VISION OF PARADISE* (Mill Valley, California, 1982), *THE TATTOOED HEART OF THE DRUNKEN SAILOR* (Madison, Wisconsin, 1983), and *MANICOMIO* (Eugene, Oregon, 1984).



Craig -
to the future
as librarian
8 ARTIST

Ivan Argüelles

THE STRUCTURE
OF HELL

Love
ivan

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DINS AQUESTA VASTA CAMBRA DELS MALS ENDRECOS,
ON MOLTS DE NOSALTRES HEM DE VIURE, NO ES
ESTRANY QUE EL "DESORDRE" SIGUI, ENCARA, L'UNIC
ORDRE POSSIBLE

J. V. Foix

(In this vast room of bad situations, where many of us have
to live, it is not strange that "disorder" is, nevertheless, the
only order possible)

FOR NIKKI IN MEMORIAM

Grateful acknowledgement is made to the editors of the
following magazines in which some of these poems first
appeared:

LONG HOUSE, LOST AND FOUND TIMES, CENTRAL
PARK, MINOTAUR, ATTICUS REVIEW, PROOF ROCK,
VELOCITIES, WINDFALL, TOUCHSTONE, IMAGES.

CANCER WARD

the ocean in my ear has turned off its siren
a gypsum foam gathers rushing
to erase the dark alphabets of my knees
what dream is so clear it is not utter confusion?
a bitter asking wrapped in the burning towel
which is the shadow of the body of my soul
beneath my fingernails administrators and tax consultants
with turning brown with indefinite demands
is it legitimate to ask where is my child?
night folds its dense starless carpet
over the black grasses where my eyes grow
lovers naked and minute lie in the spit of memory
worried for the calculations of an unknown metal
the Surgeon knows who drowned from spite
the Surgeon knows who fixed the door with a cigarette
the Surgeon understands the ominous increase of white
what room is this full of liquid tubes?
all space tilts from the crazy angle of that window
emptying legendary planets into a sanitary basket
woman's theme is butter breasts and broader hips
man's theme is the thin red line that leads to claustrophobia

I pass through the japanese quarter in a dream bus
a dead fern proceeds through my left side
needles hundreds of miles long plunge slowly through my arms
heaven opens its bottle of cerulean ether
I breathe and lose all earthly shape
hearing in my other ear the recitation of the desert

ADRIANOPOLIS OCTOBER 1912

fumes rising from the moon's charred shell
horse skulls upon which the shadowy women dance
intoxicated with the left-over sense of burning
as the world will burn gnawing on animal flesh
oblivious of the manifesto of light to come
but the HYSTERIA on the right with its arms of fire
and the HYSTERIA on the left majestic in its rags
tottering across the jagged maps of nation states

is this the rage of jacobite and assassin?

I love the machine for expediency
I love the machine because it is clean
I love the machine because it is future
I see it razing the air of its charnel houses
I see it probing the dark with its language of x-rays
I see it fixing history once and for all
outside the dialectic of time

I have spoken with the hypnotist of the old empire
I have annointed the great turk with the oils of david

but to the sea-coast in agonized dream I rush
jades and corals multiplying beyond control
my hands the instruments of antiquity
delivering clouds from their skeletons
the future I cry the future is here.

THE STRUCTURE OF HELL

the psychiatrist unable to sleep plays recordings
of ophelia hypnotized in a river of eels and ice
the music winds around invisible columns of sperm
which angels have left in their insomniac meanderings
in search of either the perfect post-card or the syllable
that means hell in the aboriginal language of turkey
immense curtains of dust obsess the ruined windows where
faces of ancient and yearning children flicker
like discarded paper lanterns burning forever
chords of an insane lyric pattern in the beset mind
oceanic surges leading to an asylum for ecstatic nuns
whose gathering is called the divine restaurant
threads of interpretation bright as blood on the moon
stones scattered like dice on plates otherwise empty
a chilling reflection in the wardrobe mirror
because the christ of ventriloquism has come and gone
an essay spilled in ethereal ink wrecks the air
which is the preterite quadrant of orphans and widows
nine times the good doctor circles the phonograph
nine times the stellar illusion of those drowned
with neither blessing nor the right totem animal
stirs in the imprecise grooves of an archaic sound cylinder
thomas alva edison responding to a teletape from Pluto
darkens the remainder of his own death with a stalactite
borrowed from the greek sessions of moes maimonides
while herr Doktor breuer is laid out in the viennese suburbs
a meal for waltzing stallions who derive their verb system
from the orgiastic rites of hungarian gypsies

three times I try to return the left arm to its sleep
three times the message of platinum awards flood the sky
three times a cigarette echoes the industry of the damned

I am a rhythm in two or three lyric themes
haunted by lorelei whom the composer mahler followed
deep into the montezuma pine which is a rune on the mountain
five thousand miles south of the origin of wind and water

FELIZ ANO NUEVO!

MILK

a drop of ink has been buried in the milk
and the light of the first door filters through the mask
of one drinking the milk trying to taste the words
spelled by the ink in its dissolution
everything else becomes smaller fits into the coffin
where my father is preparing his ride
into an infinity of empty stones and silent reeds
I turn from the events of sleep massive and endless
to the daytime of certain grasses to their noons
precise as needles beneath eyelids
and remember to the last detail the summer
when ice came into being on the door-step
and the air was gathered like a map of brazil
hot yellow and green filled with voices of flies
& my mother in textures of main street browns
appeared for the first time as the most amazing and distant
of all beings tying kerchiefs around invisible udders
and drying her eyes with stories known only to the wind
I am a sailor after all I know adrift
in a sea of eternal milk and in my ears
windowpanes stained with a drop of ink buzz
a hundred thousand whispered words strain
to fix their cloudy convention in the suburbs
which spread like vast red sheets from the graveyard
and a silence as intricate as the bodies of dead children
consumes me in my vessel of distant sands
minute by minute their impossible small hands
undo the extent of my memory draining me of color
until I fade with my brothers into the glass
from which the milk was poured

DAGUERREOTYPE

the universe is wild with the riot of becoming
night and the weird circumstances of fire and sulphur
and like photographs just barely glimpsed the luxurious
masses of women's hair damp and thick with essences
of mystery and fragrant remote seas
colliding with the sleeper whose hotel is an empire of beds
each as intricate as the cities of memory
and beholding the fragmented and instantaneous moment of being
the eye is seized with the imperfect nostalgia for grasses
for linens of clover and salt
planets come forth from the naked iris
red and triumphant only to crash with the hemisphere of ice
and between the eyelids the passing image of the woman
the impossible extensions of her moon-like skin
is it noon already in the great hour of descending?
the order of things becomes confused is reversed
collapses in layers of sentient smoke
powerful animals with voices enormous as mountains
subside in the eternity of the unseen water
so many intentions and promises sucked into the vortex
and histories like billiard games carom on the sheet of light
that precedes the click of the shutter

did I pass thus from the ancient bed
seized with imperfect remembrances of the infinite love?
do I proceed from chamber to chamber spelled in darkness
a larceny of fishes of apostolic lies of dense madness
processing the cells of lucidity known as consciousness?

silence goes forth from the massive unintelligible volume
the names of the senators become question marks
puzzles which not even the poets consider for a background
the woman who flashed for a second in the fire's reflection
is joined with the genesis of a stone being hurtled
into the truths of the future distance
which is the past returning on its burning cycle

ELECTROSHOCK

those cadavers and lenin and everyone burning!
and the lawyer who says there are improprieties in flame
but who is the judge who decides which assassin goes free
and which gets strapped to the chair to fry?
they bring me here backwards on my august mule
am I crying from too much nature and the right to sample truth?
the heart is a process of enormous sadness capable
of outlasting such words as somatology and definitive
dividing the hair from its root and the nail from its finger
yet I have been fifteen years in the same shoe
trying to write a single line in ether and cold azure
while the child was maimed in the name of medicine
and the doctors farmed out truth from under the cicatrix
am I to speak for those unconscious but still living?
the avenues move through a landscape of eventual mist
the academics lunch on spine and the universal rose
the students clamor for better living arrangements
and all the time locked in a black box below the stitching
those cadavers and lenin and everyone burning!

CRANEOTOMY. 1.

angel didnt come furnished with cigarettes
the top of the room started to float leaving
cold ingots of sky hanging in mid-air and the dreamers
of a different eternity talked wildly in whispers
about the kind of junk you can get on earth
after the rain and in a room all sound-proofed
we unfolded all kinds of maps looking for you
a single red dot flared in the back of the brain
teeth and a mouth from an ancient statue by the sea
eyes painted cinematically on the wall and the abrupt
sense of a pain going right to the bone when the bell rang
all winter long we tried stoking the fire with stems
of glass or dried reeds and only smoke appeared
and the veins in our flesh became the plans of gods
infusing in us the tea of their symphonies
wherever we looked they pasted the same poem on the surface
water came and took away the words a marble foot
acted in accordance with certain laws of gravity
the rhythm hammered in our heads by the advocate
declared nothing to us of the lost hemisphere
surgeon archaeologist and dental assistant stared
amazed that we could walk in and out of the mural
do you remember then when the flame burst forth?

DEATH MASK

you settled the accounts but the surgeon ignored you
they talked quietly about the paradise of Vishnu
uneasy but mellifluous tones drowned out by the brawling
of a pair of men who had just immolated their wives
believing firmly in the geographical serenity of the afterworld
a knife in the smoke the sky blazed futilely
before the masks came off and the revellers
their faces stricken with patches of brimstone
faltered looking for the mistaken grace of the bannister
before falling totally into the prepared abyss
you understood then the meaning of the stairs
even though their cause was an abandoned future
and the good doctor changing from a blood-stained butcher's smock
into the hyper-correct phases of a hypnotic uniform
led you from the fiery ledger where it is written
that water and its shadow will ever follow
while nurses with errant photographic concern and wearing
the vast heads of antlered totem animals arranged the garden
where each flower is a position for the eye scouring hell
and there you were conditioned with dark plates
like enormous x-ray screens and you held your breath
while the hooded trickster luminous for a brief moment
captured you for eternity in an attitude of false comfort

from the top floors of the adjacent hotel came cries
of sleepers whose promised dawn was strangled in brown mufti
names scattered in the perfumed air shining like the lights
which are used to code the various ancient constellations

MY HEART IS THE SNOW THAT NEVER BURNS

does the green angel rot in the wheat? and only once?
my heart dont go! if you leave the mountain never to return
and the great negative weathers of epistemology
howling in the blood of the forests that have been skinned
by the tact of man for an irreversible future of love!
my heart is the stone in the wall by the mercury light
my heart is the fig tree ravaged and alone in the defile
my heart is the hooded figure cast from the tower
my heart dont leave me! and the unspeakably beautiful
gentleman from the Madras Presidency who thought he was SITA!
I know him as I know the horse who glowers masterfully
from the summit of the endless noon of the gods
and what else rots with the green angel only once?
prayers of childhood delivered in a secret envelope of rice paper
emissaries sent from a soul haunted by what lives in hell
ELYSIUM my heart dont leave me! cancer in the air of order
cancer in the scrotum of the water which fills the delta
with a strange light of blood edged with gold trim
my heart! I have glimpsed you only once burning
arrayed with the enormous theater of the wheat fields
embroidered with all the eyelids of gehenna
my heart is the column of shadow that joints heaven to its musk
my heart is carried by two white bullocks to the pyre!

THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE MIND IS BEING FILLED OUT

But whose are the faces on the battlements?
moon-haunted chiselled from some ancient ire
we look up to them as to fragments of a colossal myth
that broods on the density of its own shadow
and in the plain a horse-hide drum pounds
announcing the great Northern Music of a weird fate
while in the hills crouching like centennial dwarfs
muses of the subtle Perception declare birthday
to the elements which are burning underfoot
and thousands of miles to the east where the red cow
has been sacrificed for wearing the color of the heath
the tragedian mimes the Song of Remembrance
to nations which by dawn are flooding the gates
symphonically speaking this occurs between vast octaves
and the library's inner ramparts BURN ignited
by the fanatic grammarian of barbary wearing his turban
of injected fuels

in bars functioning on pure air
the Mexican gardener tunes his cactus to thousand
degree alcohol from which proceeds a poetry of glyphs
clipped from millennial stone which the oxen of the sun
are commanded to eat as if they were tickets
and the brides of the light-house are marched
through the wicker-work of stars smoking parched eels
which are the stigmata of late german philosophy!

THE SILK WORKSHOP

I draw the long cool thread through her eye
weathers of clouds softer than memory's water
form in the minute wound which is her sleep
billowing mythically in a landscape of severe distance

I spin the shadow around each thumb foregoing abandon
for a strict inquiry into the soul's process
a dialogue in sleek currents ensues just below the surface
where her image wild and dark was first printed

evening comes with its hundred various paper lamps
chinamen reciting envelopes of abstract religion
develop photographs of an instant sky with blue streamers
whose source is the remote cathay of the french poets

she drives the masses of huge soft tissue through the woof
hands symphonies of inexpressable nostalgia
the rains begin just beneath the hair-line where it is written
that miles of skin will obstruct the celestial lake

I fix the dusk of her hair with an invention of fireflies
I explore the limitless desert with the wedge of fire
which is her breath after the last star has collapsed
in the petite basin where she rinses the stains from her tongue

for years an emblem glows in the single window of mind
she comes and goes dressed as the mask of the forever holiday
ancient scribes assign to her a house in the zodiac
legend is the hush around the place where her body sleeps

A LESSON IN COLLEGE ENGLISH

the iconographers file by dead in my sleep
each waiting for an aspirin from the Hypnotist
a viennese melody the first one ever invented
conveys them like a psychopomp from this world to the next
we are asked to look for our ears
we are searched beneath the hair-line for the residual wound
the judge clocks our response wearing a pornographic leer
a distance haloed by moon-blight is revealed in the waste
of the first book of the prussian bible
there where we are marched corrupted by a byzantine coin
a florid woman with exactly five tarot cards in her left hand
pronounces each of us technically dead
sky unzipped looses a discharge of red litmus paper
we are given numbers that pronounced correctly
will provide us with bread in prison
a house of water with reflecting pools in the roof
stars buried under the molten granary of its shadows
a darkness intricate as childhood in analysis
we are broken in spirit by a great tumbler of ice
and led forth into a grand waiting room
where carabinieri in mufti crack lice with their gun butts
to the far right where the dreams are bled of their sand
a rusted locomotive sits tilted in the dune
they say that is where ulysses landed
when he chanced to visit our island

VAMPIRE

tropheys of love in the windows and on the door
but I'm dead I'm hills of ashes and dust
they signal to me they rush me with hot wires
that cut right through marrow and nerve
But I'm dead I feel nothing of this perseverance
nothing of this technical mastery of life
and am deposited in catalogs of rust and brine
where I list reciting the first verses of tripoli
and they return with their hideous blue litmus paper
to prove there is no sky above me nor below
and the mud of their commands turns to exquisite logic
and they are supreme in their chastity of knowing
but I am DEAD a fixture in the plaster of reason
mumbling numbly the runic formulas of love
devastated by the great aviator Lucifer
for I have been There also in the Gehenna
which is the isolation ward of the incurable
and the korean guards with pig helmets and license
to kill have asked me nothing spearing the air
but I know the realm of the dead the ruddy animals
thrusting snouts in the rich humus of prosperity
which is but an illusion a bay of invisible water
a shadow that the famous people wear to the country club
but I'm dead a statistic a cipher in red litmus paper
a cloud element of flunked german prose
rattling cardboard chains and hymning the apollo of the pool
NO I'M DEADER THAN ALL THAT ABRACADABRA A ROMANIAN
who has never left the destroyed wall a bat
albino blind excrescence of ancient latin order
terminated in the prejudice of the twentieth century

ACTS OF QUIET DESPERATION

who is this skeleton of suicide
weaving angry bottles around the mirror?
I will fly into the red weapon of sleep
a corpse of desire a willing debacle
through my blank eye fly the oneiric sword
the hangman the queen of spades
which will I choose vibrating on the diamond of isolation?
triumph of stars and lilies are written
in the geography of the basement of mind
PAPERS OF CRYSTAL EYES OF SHADOW
the tutelary deity in its feminine gender
explores the viscera of my inner life
and my hands are clouds with bullets
while the language of my invisible self
eats the raw-hide of an intuitive death
and my double paces its stairs of air
with an incomprehensible lyric of frozen parks
will I dine in the restaurant of chance
with the dead and amazed poet ABU BEKR?
I drive up the hair-pin curves of the last highway
and the rain dances on my brain!
it is too late in the evening of tautology
it is already past twilight in the bird-song
the ancient rhapsodies have no more ink!

ABORTION

if it were the habit merely of seeing through the body
through the dress the body wears to cover up the bloody lung
through the skin taken off in the morning and re-dressed at night
through which the world's cold lace has been riddled
if it were the habit merely of guessing where the shadow stepped
where the water commenced by the end of what year in what land
but instead it is an act solemn and final in a railroad station
Somewhere in the province where the hunters have frozen
all the assets and the bankers drown in privilege
and we are seconded by lymphatic telescopes in the cranium
and the surgery tables are littered with pariah dogs
all bearing in some whimsical way resemblances to our names
from the balcony the ticket-taker hurls confetti
and a microphone inside the obstetrician's violin announces
the hypnotic row of places through which the train will roll
syllables derived from a grammar of veins and hair
snatched from a mirror where the infanticide went crazy
trying to pull off what was left of her face

we will be drawn through the dark sieve sleeping clouds
transformed by images of a peaceful war in ancient grasses
archaic gods composed of dust and languorous distances
dancing through the intricate landscape of our last thoughts

CUIADO AMIGO

the featureless pain at the back of the head
and outside the incessant rain the shoeless oracle
the debacle at the tip of existence where the needle
fits the mind and the organism becomes undone
white turns to red and red turns to black
sky unfolds like a faded suit and the cards
tumble to the side-walk used half-eaten memories
addresses obliterated by a mistaken appointment
a wrong choice a direction returned to itself
the wild ink that describes the ultimate page
you concern yourself with a single detail
a conical observation within an infinite shuttle
between two stars and then you catch yourself falling
or dream that you are erect again talking
to that woman in a paper hotel forty stories high
density and the oblique capacity of hair to absorb
how many shadows have you lost on that stairway?
they bring you back to a room and though it is home
you still want to go home wherever that is
a danger signal marks the left-hand and an arrow
exactly like an angel proceeds from the right hand
death flashes her calendar at you and you cannot read
the days the margins fill with cropped nails
a horse enters through the window and eats the tickets
actually it develops into a headache into a desire for sleep
you yield and skirts of light diminish from view
your eyes attend the ceremony of quantum darkness
how could you know the day would end like this?
an automobile tears through streets of water
bearing your legend frail and tossed like a leaf
from the event of its structure of nerve and bone

FEAR OF FALLING

was it a metaphor when I fell?
the dog leaping between the spaces
that separate flesh from father
the bed suddenly no more than a page of water
the floor an abstract of immense density
where the blind angels with their contusions
waited to spear me with accusations of love
how could I know the next moment was forever?
a straw in the mouth of the word for mother
impossibilities of the kingdom of the soul
the intricate passageway called mind
being emptied of its dark grasses

which was that animal that playing
knocked me down from the realm of the senses?

they showed me the photograph of the eyelid
reversed on itself in spires of light
organs of delicate balance gone askew
the science of revival in the embryonic dust
honoring the head but not what it says

CRANEOTOMY. 2.

pushed to the edge by squadrons of flame
hidden in ravines of smoke too tired to sleep
I began to see the secret forms of angels
the doctors informed me of the body's passing
their mouths filled with liquid pages of the Lost Book
who could predict the sound of tool against bone?
seraphic as a music of pure intelligence rocking in metal
the ancestral voices drowned forever in ether
how did I know of the chemistry of the Law?
keys to the flowers of spain dust of algebra
where the old coffin with its wild eyelids
stays awake scanning the painted sky for a sign
they lay me down there with the inhabitants of ice
and scored the infinite nerve for its rock
nothing eternally nothing in that hour of time
I put my head to one side to prevent the dreams
from escaping into the clinical version of light
the horse my companion in silence turned to water
hooves that pounded in mineral core the code
gone fluid in the strange unwinding they call mind
majesterial in their gowns of blood the surgeons
explored the depths for the animal of fever
the heart a cry from the hair-line a hand numbed
the how many numbers of hell uncounted in their scheme
QUALITY OF LIFE THE GOOD DOCTOR SAID IN HIS DRUM OF ALCOHOL

PIRACY

buckets of blood in which the moon verbs are washed
giant boiled squid the remembrance of a lost constellation
copulate in the brass cove of the fandango dancer
your voice walks through haunted stone a trellis
of smoke or the furious ivy of the yard-arm
the french pilgrims with their great pikestaffs
sink slowly through the watery lesions of ancient grammar
sabots of dust cutlasses the size of the sky!
it says in the text that the drowned are ineffable
I prepare the stage with mirrors of death & innocence
your voice your magnificent unconscious voice
sails like a flag through the evidence of botany

THE FLYING DUTCHMAN

it rides the tide definitely into the red moon
below the pared nails of the holy cipher
below the balance where measures of gold and deceit
are weighed against the furious alloy of time
it buckles under the bridge of air beneath hair
that has perfected the dream where cured of cancer
the hag of death presides more beautiful than ever
she distributes grades to the failed lovers!
she smiles and the ruddy animals of the prophet
sink in the great invitation of water
will I ever wake from this dream of shipwrecks?
a hand no larger than the mind that conceived it
descends through epic quantities of sky
warriors already ghosts dried of their blood
rise through phantom cities into the cloud
where I sit wrapped in sheets of blank pages
I watch with a terrific and blind nostalgia how the waves
wash all horizons away and voices of the drowned
address me with colors of sand and ink
AN END TO THE UNIVERSE OF INDESTRUCTIBLE MUSIC

APHASIA

with what secret syllables I strive for darkness
I mean when I open the window and sleep in the bulb
planted deep beneath my wounded side I mean the night
I cant remember the victory of the golden oracle
nor in what hospital the battle happened I mean
when the agents with their huge black wings hastened
through the needles with their ropes of fire I
mean the veins the stitching the incandescent opal
my eyes under the tongue my shoulders hidden in weight
I think unless the operation on my hair or is it grass?
legend takes her skirts and throws them out the mirror
a knife a spoon a flashlight no a battery I need
the super-nova in my brain I mean the wounded mind
hoops and dashes and commas except I am asleep
again and the bed is a statue of marble laid on its side
and the soul it is me fractured crystal paper of smoke
each hand seeks the other in the circle of treaties
broken where the concordance was supposed to be
rhymes corrupted by ivy myths severed from their day
I dream a chair with wheels with speed and time
to be other than what I mean planting seeds in the reflection
spirals of vegetal breath the crown of chalk the moon
it descends on its wistful axle I catch it I mean
am I dead then here housed in the waist of water?

AN ACCOUNT OF THE ILLNESS

if the child wakes he hears roads of zoos
falling through hundreds of years of soft earth
a detailed man with ceramic clothes and a dictionary
with pictures of illicit flowers approaches
in his eyes the teeth of an envelope eat flame
animals blind with vertigo fall from his hands
a water pure as the end of the constellation pours from
the words he uses to command the construction of illness
the fever begins to climb through biological abstracts
a sky stolen from the geography of asia minor
unfurls like a cool silk flag against the window
where the rain leaks its myriad faces of sleep
the child unravels the moon's crimson thread
clouds of grammatical error burst silently open
other details assert their heavy clothing against the horizon
the intricate thoughts of insects are pressed
on the pillow's underside which fills with a liquid
much like the echo of the sound the man makes
as he finishes the lace scaffoldings that support
the immense thermometer in the child's mouth

THE UNBEARABLE IRRELEVANCE OF THE SELF

indecipherable history of exiles illumined by sky's chainsaw
lyric depravity terrific nostalgia for the ruins of gardens
apocalyptic children in love forever with the desperate other
slow cadaver of the hours that devour the lost memory

nothing is restored transitory winds words days the wall of ire
they turn exiled from the garden the sign of Momus on the brow
madness the condition of darkest valleys of broken wings
they surrender to the bone hidden in the sphinx's great immobile mout.

enigmatic splendor of that lost afternoon in an ignored nation
landscape after landscape of centuries unpopulated but for epitaphs
dualities of dust mirages of eternity in erased symbols of life & death
echoes of leaf and grass darkening beneath the inevitable cloud

they have spent the eternal moment in the hotel of the lotus eaters
sand has perfected the names of their hundred and one cities
the dream of the ghost of the ether of time sings like a thread
in the abyss that is neatly folded between either ear

INJUSTICE

injustice the wayward fiend
his paintings are spoiled the grass cropped
at the edge where his lake grows
beyond the canvas and wild dogs
like eyeless gypsies on their stumps
tear the sky open rust!
the capital of death floats
just below the surface
injustice the liquor-thief of time
steps on a wave
the color red with its dictionary
imbues the water with dark lace
upheavals in the lesser strata
trigger off domino diplomacy
hangmen with the sleep of wax
pressed in their eyes
distribute the empty loaves
to those who have lost the road

SAINT ERECTION DAY

what is this monstrous affliction in my head?
PERJURY the woman I loved dead a fossil
dust turning in the eye of a hangover
rumors of cinzano and wars so many distant wars
the soul is a prize in the dark shrubbery
where the turkish onanist sleeps unguarded
but my head today is a nation of doubting tombs
I climb the spire of saint erection day
and the woman I loved I see her next to the stilts
which reason uses to enter the sea
great transparent fish consume her
they leave her fossil on a crimson rune
there are too many thoughts about what has happened
I fix my horse with tickets of spleen and oblivion
I wire the next port that the dream is on its way
"you have to be selective about the foreign capitals you visit"
this monstrous affliction which is my head!

MEDICAL CHECK UP

at a distance from poetry the doctor struggles with blood
horses with ladders & thermometers come running
swift as a page of water in the picture of hell
the chancre of a black wind or a skeleton of pure joy
the fever in a deck of cards checked by the insular ice
of a treaty forged in the druggist's feigned sleep
all hazard is invited to the consultation by mirror
lean to the west! commands the nurse of spit
the moon's cold ovaries appear like ghost dolphins on the screen
where hypnotic cures for memory are written in syllabic characters
wax figures besiege the trojan monument of pills
I descend through the dense theory and heat of cotton
to the well where the death of love is prescribed
"how many parents have you had in a lifetime?"
I dont understand the question I fail the test
a latin elegist with a silver head-plate flies through the air
the office turns upside down diminishing in the ash tray
where talking cigarettes converse with the turkish surgeon
"no man is an island" the good medic's voice shakes
his hands divide the curtains of light from the x-ray
my lungs explode like flowers of mercury
I am lost in the vast orbital numbers of the cicatrix

AN ACCOUNT OF MY EARACHE

with hair-line agape and a silk ankle
I go boating through the mind's profound rug
the wind folds up the grain of words
the waves flush with victory grow stiff
turning impossibly golden in the tepid noon
a siren blows in the ear's opium portal
sleep the great nostalgia for darkness
spreads its breath into the purple sails
I am sent to the horizon beyond the islands
whose geography is an ornate sound pattern
my lung fills with a decadent flower
a mist covers my eyes my skin rolls off
somewhere in the land of my spine a hand
unwinds the thick rope of memory
dense as oil my body's drum drops to the surface
pricked by the sun's surgical needles
and I dream I am ripe with death
infinite soundless floating towards
the air's belabored spice fields
a ulysses of smoking hemp I tilt off balance
a black sombrero covers my face
the lace of circe's unkempt hair
drives consciousness from my voice
I am absolutely alone in a world of bells!

HORN OF ROLAND

I walk out of the photograph accompanied
by the great dead fishes of antiquity
I put on my face adjust my bones
destroy my hair rephrase my skin and smile
I wonder who all the voices in the grass
are or if the harbor where time is anchored
has been ruffled by the infidel's red burnoose
a black lesson of clouds proceeds from my mouth
the evidence of a luminous skeleton
the proof of the wind's darkened history
a lesion predicted in the opium bloom
I sense these things in the tapestry
where the fall of wondrous cities is depicted
I walk through the dispersal of treaties
of napkins & geological maps of the moon
the color white descends in sheets
I sense the rain I herald the thunder
a searing flame cold and shaped like a needle
passes simultaneously through my temples
& I am aloft on death's ivory elephant
separating the spokes of blood and leaf
with the paper steeple of my tongue

DEATH OF CALISTO

disaster written on the paving stones
the weeks the months the days the last hour
drugged on love incoherent the lace of time
snapped from night's hyacinth wrist

one false step on the ladder the void
not a moment wasted in placing wagers on death
the head broken in three parts the brains
gathered by an invisible hand of the stars

for why do we live this strange dream?
on the telephone they said the parents knew nothing
Melibea lied the servants had their heads cut off
there was nothing about tomorrow but glass

below the dust where they trim the grass
where the coffins get up and talk and dance
where the handsome rooster named socrates
gets drunk they are celebrating this drama

professors with cool hair and dead eyes discuss
the renaissance in terms of philology
whose marriage to mercury they declare a fraud
it is all commerce and a fast trip to the top

horses with the names of ancient panderers
calmly eat the last traces of the ladder
a gypsy woman with no eyes at all sees the future
writhing on the painted palms of her hands

options of love greed lust desire phantoms smoking
in the back of a lost railroad car with knives
planted in their breastplate deride the peninsula
where cruelty is the best part of the daily bread

ROMANTIC ERA

now when I think of angel I think death
the darkest summer cold river between the ears
immense skies whorled like marble in the horse's eye
a rain of frozen trees in their primary green
on the landscape of a lost carpathian kingdom

now when I think of shepherd I think death
cool and blank the nameless season below the hair-line
ingots of surgical gold poured into the mind
which is seized with dreaming of leafy seas
and the endless circuit where they invent sand

now when I think of paradise I think death
miles of black skin released in the empty quarry
which is called greece by the pharmacologist of time
islands dense with raped statuary and the brute navy
of that great and dead cyclops Lord Nelson

now when I think of love I think death
the intense white drug that undoes the brain
sleeping through centuries of wild ciphers
animals princely and blind corrupting on the gold horizon
waiting for the storm of bleeding tickets

now when I think of death I think DUPLICATES
swooning on verandahs of lace and snow in the one autumn
mirror to mirror with the brother of the shadow's bride
locked in the abrupt embrace of two soldiers
whose teeth are set on the vast thread of the Invisible

GLEICH WIE DER REGEN UND SCHNEE VON HIMMEL FALLT

we must be prepared for the orthographic variations
for the extreme deviations in the light by the broken pane
for the length of syllabic quality in the prejudiced rhyme
for the doctor whose cunning prescription is death itself

descending on the minor key bass chord backwards in the mirror
the color of snow the emotional texture of rain turning to snow
the density of scar tissue just below the roots where the hand turns
the key in the corrupted lock where the myths are stored

genesis of weather in the ear-ache and the drum pounding
until sleep becomes its own exegesis and the dreamer haunted
by what wakes in the clouds revolves the thermometer in his head
and dials somewhere into the abyss the missing finger of ink

names explode silently collapsed behind thick walls of dust
medieval city states devoured by metropolitan cockroaches pass
through the drain flushed by the concord of scientific technique
I am alert to the lust in the very last accent in the depth!

depravity in the music of water and in the shadow of fire
voices of a broken choir resound like needles in the hypnotist's eye
childhoods of fauns and centaurs are left to bleed on the grass
fathers of duplicitous intent tune up their wild violins

years of humming the opposite lyric against nurses of memory
hands attached to the eyes of dead hummingbirds sent in reverse
mountains where the mad have climbed lingering for the picnic
of moon spine and the exquisite hymn of the poisoned tidal wave

defiant in the exercise of kneeless gymnasts reciting plato
I wed the Daughter of the Sun the one who turned the swine to song
and pass as beams of ethereal sound into the blank euphrates
a foreigner to the country where I learned the dreaded chant

HUMAN BITTERLY HUMAN

the descent into anxiety into the talking leaves
endlessly inquiring about minutia and rubble
the languages broken in their spine by hysteria
& the great noon-time when nothing but sleep is resolved

I go back to the nether country to the blind children
to the vast meal sacks filled with counter values
where the gods have deposited their weighty tongues
and I hear the babble of antediluvian dreams

the dross of thought levelled on onion-skin paper
the cities of enormous pride flattened by the critical tooth
heaven itself opened and shut by the coal-miner's fall
the seas rushing in to claim their bitter gold

my shoulder speaks to the clouds and the clouds are bombs
a havoc of shattered wagons plunging with the glacier
my needs are halved and the mute priests reduce the halves
distributing their dull knees to the church of despair

where can I turn on the hour of ultimate grass?
strange animals still in hypnosis probe the wound
which persists beneath the thumb-nail licking it clean
of the viscera of ideas while red angels bang cymbals

I am deaf with virtue I echo the gun-laws of liquor and crime
I steep the poem into its residual elements bleeding
all over the fierce page of water where I am to sign my life
the decrees are out and I am condemned to speech

A FOREIGNER IN PARADISE

I ACQUIRE A NEW LANGUAGE

I raise the sensuousness of the grass into flame
& sleep in the intricate eyelid of the embolism
three decades of sapphire and heliotrope in vitro
gulf-streams of ancient deaths pour through me

in the dense idiom of the turkish gold-filers
I discourse with the profligate remnants of time
the cruel hour of the teeth of classical angels
cuts the sky into remote and unequal halves

I float through Their hotels an embryo of hair
mothers of terrible and inane digits call to me
winds rush through the tubular chains of identify
erasing me as I plunge like flame through soil

at the roots small mouths hammer their lips into water
gray bishops of tungsten and iodine flog me with litanies
afternoons of radiance and shuddering are pressed into the leaf
white roots of love tangled in the bone of imminent truth!

tongues ears wild syllables of backwards horses
the mountain of language reared on the portico of light
edges of feathers and brass tom-toms and alcohol of drums
I embrace the second part of the stem and rise to the lyric

a dreamer on the fierce pedestal of circumstance
I see the avenue of Alpha and Omega storm through the blade
traffic of cunning surgeons of knives of insane fishes
flushed from the arcade into oblivion's dense white linen

THE GREAT FISH OF EXILE AND MY FATHER

the Indians are wearing lenin's mask
no it is the mask of my father age thirty-five
I am going to Luneberg to study the signs
the fossil of my body has appeared on the screen
a great fish with languid phosphorescent eyes
devouring the grammar of beauty and its wild grasses
but those Indians in the bar stomping up and down
with their painted moustaches and lenin masks
and the key to my sister's evil past
THE RIVER OF THE STARS HAS NO SOURCE
it is noontime on the holiday map and an airplane
is taking mother to the correct hotel of the zodiac
while my father climbing off the wall
proceeds to spear invisible and angelic fish
darting through the antediluvian sky
and on the radio it says there is a fire sale
and immigrants from bogota swarm the plaza
using the mutilated dialect of pizarro to express
their analphabetic desire of ongoing revolution
and lenin dressed in tattered buffalo robe
indignant as the zeus of children's literature
scours the heavens for a single answer
they peel the beard off his piano
they enunciate in the precise pyrenees dialect
the very way roland's horn sounded on paper
my father never does find the way home
the piano is destroyed by gilt octopods
the founder of barcelona looking just like the painter Miro
directs him through the oneiric traffic
into the bed where the starfish are x-rayed
etymologists with degrees in ecstatic hypnosis
convey his shadow through the sculpted bone
and mother rises from the rug a persian gazelle
whose planet of water has just been invented

I CORRECT THE SALUTE TO THE DEAD

I emphatically deny all categories of hope
the contemporaneous tuesdays with their market mustaches
the whip-lashed botany with its tooth of mercury
the edges of the biblical and imperative mask
the months charged with assault in full mid-day
I regret the accents with which they pass judgement
those sleepwalkers of hypnotically beautiful regression
reciting passages from the great medical texts
of reversal and light in oneiric taxonomy
I shoot out the vast windows of unrepeatable azure
where attestations to the existence of gods flicker
like the tails of childish and potential stars
I approach without trepidation the immense doors
of the Fraudulent Surgeon who washed innocence of its cure

what can ever last of this flimsy and brief spark?
the silver stubble of the mines of the soul is burning again!

A TOURIST IN HELL

I salute the great somnambulants of Botany!
these are no cheap imitations of the dead
but the very dead in human and dreaming skin

I cry reading their texts of opaque water
my shoulders philosophize on the contradictions
which are both growth and the stimulus to death

UNKNOWN ELEMENTS IN THE GRAPH OF LIMPID PYRAMIDS
a hundred souls smoked in a single luminous cigarette
flowers of the radiant south of morphine forever burning!

their cities come back to me in vast elemental leaves
criss-crossed with the fine inks of a brain-storm in china
nowhere does it say how we shall return

I encounter enormous hotels of paper and grass
columns like weaving women support the myth of the roof
I lay the body down beneath the palm-bark fan

symbolisms of iodine and cotton wadding are expressed
in the skin's intricate radios and the hallucination
of the famous doctor corrodes beneath the eyelid

someone has repeatedly shouted my name in the corridor
it is the afternoon of the end of time
in my pockets their photographs leave permanent holes

the tickets have been destroyed in a game of chance
the police have come to restore order to the sleep of reason
I am returned to the illegible conclusion in fine print

THE LESSON OF ALCOHOL

I have yearning for the great claustral forms of water
for the submerged bells of philosophy that ring
in the haunted eras of the deaf who have seen the light
I sit alone while the crowds swirl drunkenly around me
birds swoop through the tavern so low they peck at their shadows
the dead who still stand stiff at the bar gaze with dignity
into the overt mirror of their terrible past sorrow
but I am drunker than all poised on the chair of infinity
fractioned from the nerve that bore me through hell
a hand paints me in clouds of winged and unrepeatable azure
I surface on the glass with the dolphins of antiquity
the fossils of hair of the famous matrons drift like dust
I become opaque sad dense a wild adolescent demanding paternity
echoes and mirages of some nostalgic and distant willow arbor
I sink through a music of thirds and minor treble keys
musk the odors of the female deltas and skins of fierce wine
assemble like friends in the crowded apex of my eyelid
the Self I cry must be erased with all its dross and feathers
it is not gold nor the image of gold but a random idea
colored by the blind bead-maker who works in the back mind
I assert nothing more and return my palms to the covert bottle
I remove my acute and grave accents I sleep in the circumflex
where the remote animals of the hallucination of water
master their celestial roles booming in impossible skies

FOR MAX ON HIS WAY TO PHILADELPHIA

I care for the tooth for the eye for the dense
memory behind the hair for the meadows in the cavity
for the scar-line which has never healed
I care for the child wounded by the photograph
by the killing light of the disease without name
for the blood shed in earnest behind doors of ether
I care for the sky glimpsed in sleep for the sea
packed beneath the right ear-lobe for the amputated
half of thought for the circles that cannot be
I care for the essence of grass locked beneath the tongue
for the food kept at a distance from its own disaster
for the spool unwound somewhere past the hand
I care for the fingers that cannot grasp meaning
for the legs bent by the bed's sad complexity
I care for the insane howl of the back brain
severed from the intensive unit of reason

DE RERUM NATURA

I dont tolerate the flowers of the Victor
the prismatic language in which the Victor speaks
when poised on the scalpel of delivery
as he bears the backwards infancy of my childhood
among the many death's heads which adorn him
I reject the luminous alphabets of the Victor
I have nothing to do with the words they spell
they are cadavers burning with secret fires
I prefer the stupendous drums of the king of Wine
where I weigh the irreversible hell of my double
the universe is not with me when I sleep
and I sleep daily in the dieresis of my tympanum
I dream not of the Victor but of the end of my brain
when I wake I am weird and remember nothing
of that awful and vast white page of nostalgia
the doctors cease attending my rites
the priests and shamans spurn my resurrection
THE POVERTY OF BOOKS AND THEIR ENDLESS ASH
blind asterisks which are the detritus of stars
projections of a compass through my eyes
world after world corrupts in the fame of the lie
I do not surrender to the Victor's phonetic decay
I count my change in a different language
forbidding the rutting mares of the wind
to deflect me from the great Purpose
this is the unbearable existence of the spleen!
inordinate values superimposed on the water
I am at the end of the seven principles of life
I deny the Victor his tremendous ovations
in my blood the wires become sonant and wild
I receive messages from the damned that it cannot be!

THE POETRY READING

I wake with trouble in my ear
the grass in my brain has grown black
the cadavers of thought and time stink
naked I step through the mirror
looking for a very cold glass of lemonade
my tongue is in distress
angels with rusted iron feet have trampled
on its surface and pulled at the teeth
under my arm a strange lump wants attention
La Cubana takes her sweater off
right in front of my eyes
it wants to be paradise but it is only
the cemetery of my final bed
I wander through the paper rooms
striking down the walls with my breath
ancient images of scribes gone blind
recording the events of history
do nothing to make me feel secure
a text is pressed into my palms
patches of words now obsolete or forgotten
an invisible presence leads me to the podium
and I am greeted with animal disdain
pictures of my father and leon trotsky
burn in the very back of the salon
a broken piano is put into service
accompanying my voice's haunted want

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